

57. Higher perches

By *Ron Klinger*

South dealer : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
3♠	4♥	Pass	1♣ ?

What would you do as South with:

♠ J64
♥ A764
♦ A
♣ AJ973

You have surprisingly good support for partner's freely bid 4♥ and nice controls in the minors. Pity about the spades. Anything you can do about that?

Today's deals come from the final of the 2019 Spingold (USA Open Teams Knockout) between [BLASS](#) and [ZIMMERMANN](#).

Bd. 53: South dealer : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ KQ10532	
	♦ 10853	
	♣ Q2	
West		East
♠ K1098732		♠ Q5
♥ J		♥ 98
♦ Q974		♦ KJ62
♣ 6		♣ K10854
	South	
	♠ J64	
	♥ A764	
	♦ A	
	♣ AJ973	

As you can see, 6♥ is an excellent spot. With trumps 2-1 (a 78%) chance, you can always ruff two diamonds in the South hand and discard one on the club winners if the ♣Q happened to lose to West.

West	North	East	South
<i>Klukowski</i> <i>Brink</i>	<i>Now'zki</i> <i>Helness</i>	<i>Gawrys</i> <i>Drijver</i>	<i>Kalita</i> <i>Martens</i>
3♠	4♥	All Pass	1♣/1NT

Both Easts led the ♠Q. North won, cashed ♥K, ♥Q, and played the ♣Q. Drijver (E) covered with the ♣K, taken by the ace. Declarer made 12 tricks, +680. Gawrys (E) ducked the ♣Q, which won. Nowsadzki (N) then finessed the ♣J for an overtrick, +710 and 1 Imp to [BLASS](#).

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ KQ10532	
	♦ 10853	
	♣ Q2	
West		East
♠ K1098732		♠ Q5
♥ J		♥ 98
♦ Q974		♦ KJ62
♣ 6		♣ K10854
	South	
	♠ J64	
	♥ A764	
	♦ A	
	♣ AJ973	

In a practice match, playing the same Spingold deals, Susan Humphries (S) – Jessica Brake (N), members of the current Australian Women's Team, did better than the Spingold finalists:

West	North	East	South
	<i>Brake</i>		<i>Humphries</i>
3♠	4♥	Pass	1♣
Pass	6♥ ⁽²⁾	All Pass	5♥! ⁽¹⁾

(1) Can you control spades?

(2) Yes.

South might have been unlucky with the 5♥ bid. Maybe North had two rag spades and the ♣K was with West, but why should she be unlucky? Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Bidding 5♥ just needs a touch of courage.

In these auctions, you and partner need to agree in which auctions raising to 5M asks for good trumps and in which sequences it asks for control of an opponent's suit. When 5♥ here asks for control of spades, some play that 6♥ showed second-round spade control, bidding a new suit shows first-round spade control and first-round control in the suit bid and 5NT shows first-round control in spades only. On another deal, this might be valuable in enabling South to head for a grand slam.

East dealer : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	4♣
Pass	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ AJ5
♥ AK1062
♦ AQ4
♣ 87

The expectation for partner's 4♣ bid is seven or eight clubs and 7 playing tricks. You have four tricks for partner and potential for a fifth via the length in hearts and if that does not avail, then via a diamond finesse. There is a good case for bidding 6♣, but it does not come with guarantees.

Bd. 60: East dealer : Nil vulnerable

	North		
	♠ AJ5		
	♥ AK1062		
	♦ AQ4		
	♣ 87		
West		East	
♠ 986		♠ KQ1043	
♥ Q9543		♥ J87	
♦ 853		♦ J106	
♣ K10		♣ Q4	
	South		
	♠ 72		
	♥ --		
	♦ K972		
	♣ AJ96532		
West	North	East	South
<i>Klukowski</i>	<i>Now'zki</i>	<i>Gawrys</i>	<i>Kalita</i>
<i>Brink</i>	<i>Helness</i>	<i>Drijver</i>	<i>Martens</i>
		Pass	4♣
Pass	5♣/6♣	All Pass	

How would you play as South in (a) 6♣ (b) 5♣?

Against 6♣ by Martens, West led the ♥3. Declarer took the ♥A and played the ♣7: four – ace - ten. This would work if clubs were 2-2 or West began with ♣K singleton or ♣Q singleton. If West did play the ♣K or ♣Q, declarer would return to dummy and play another club, succeeding when clubs were 2-2 or when East began with ♣Q-10-4 or ♣K-10-4. When West followed with the ♣10, South played another club, 12 tricks, +920.

Against 5♣ by Kalita, West led the ♦5, taken by the ♦A, declarer played the ♣7: four – jack – king. South was always safe in 5♣ if clubs were 2-2 or 3-1. Playing the ♣7 to the ♣J was a safety play to cater for East holding ♣K-Q-10-4. South would still make 12 tricks if East began with ♣K-Q-4 or clubs were 2-2. North-South +420, but 11 Imps to [ZIMMERMANN](#).

[BLASS](#) won the match by 152-95.

In the practice match, South chose to pass initially:

	North		
	<i>Brake</i>		
West		East	South
			<i>Humphries</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West led the ♠9: five – four – two and the ♠8: jack – king – seven, followed by the ♠Q: ♣2 – ♣6 – ♠A. How would you now play as declarer?

Even when diamonds are 3-3, you have only eight tricks. Therefore, you need to establish the clubs. If you place West with the spade length, you should play the ♣8, low, ♣A, hoping West has ♣Q-x or ♣K or ♣Q singleton. If East plays the ♣K (from ♣K-x for example), you should duck. If you place East with the spade length, then you play ♣8: four – three . . . This prevents East coming in with ♣K-x or ♣K-10-x or ♣Q-10-x.

Declarer made ten tricks, +430. Note that on the actual layout, if declarer plays ♣8: four – ace . . . West can defeat 3NT by jettisoning the ♣K, not an easy play with no clue as to South's club length.

You might wonder why East played ♠K at trick 2 and ♠Q at trick 3 rather than the other way around. East was trying to suggest to West ditch the ♥Q if West held ♥Q-x-x and South ♥x-x. That would give East an entry with the ♥J-x-x if declarer needed to develop tricks in hearts.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. North dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
?	Pass	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass

(1) Weak two in hearts

What would you do as West with:

♠ K109872
♥ K8
♦ A3
♣ KQ2

2. East dealer : Both vulnerable

North
♠ J86
♥ 9743
♦ K742
♣ A7

South
♠ K10
♥ AK6
♦ J10853
♣ QJ4

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣ ⁽¹⁾
1♠	Dble	Pass	1NT
Dble	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	Dble ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Natural or balanced

(2) Primarily for takeout

West leads the ♦6. Which diamond do you play from dummy?

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

Snow White, to the seven dwarves: Now I want you all to stay home during this pandemic . . . except for you, Sneezzy. You have to leave.